

Sen. Ogden announces retirement

By [Kate Alexander](#) | Tuesday, September 20, 2011, 10:24 AM

Senate Finance Chairman Steve Ogden, R-Bryan, announced his retirement from the Texas Legislature in which he has served since 1990.

“After much thought and with great appreciation for the opportunity to have served in the Texas Legislature for the past 20 years, I am not planning to run for re-election as the State Senator from District 5,” Ogden said in a statement issued this morning.

The powerful committee chairman said something similar two years ago but jumped back into the race when the heir apparent, state Rep. Dan Gattis, R-Georgetown, dropped out. Even though senators typically hold four-year terms, Ogden would have to run again because district lines have been redrawn in the wake of the decennial census.

Ogden’s district in Williamson County and possible contenders for the seat are state Rep. Charles Schwertner, R-Georgetown, and state Rep. Larry Gonzales, R-Round Rock.

September 19, 2011 2:43 PM

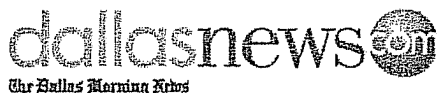
SENATOR FLORENCE SHAPIRO ANNOUNCES SHE WILL NOT SEEK RE-ELECTION

Long rumored intention, now official

Senator **Florence Shapiro** said, "It has been my honor to serve the State of Texas and all the citizens of the many communities I have represented for almost two decades. I am excited about the future and will continue with my passion for improving our state's public schools, community colleges and universities."

Senator Shapiro's full announcement will be in our **Press Release Section** later this afternoon.

State Rep. **Ken Paxton** has been most frequently mentioned as running for what will now be an open seat.



Florence Shapiro to retire after long career in Texas Senate

By GROMER JEFFERS Jr. and THEODORE KIM

Staff Writers

Published: 19 September 2011 10:21 PM

A Text Size

Sen. Florence Shapiro, one of the state's leading education policymakers, announced Monday that she's retiring from the Texas Senate, ending a political career spanning more than 30 years.

Shapiro said she would finish her term, which ends in 2013, before moving on to a job with an education company. But barring an emergency, the Plano Republican said she has participated in her last legislative session.

"I'm ready to move on to new challenges," she said. "I've been in public service for quite a while, since 1979. I'm excited about a new challenge and a different role."

As chairwoman of the Senate's Education Committee since 2003, Shapiro has had a hand in every significant state education policy for nearly a decade, and she's been Collin County's most prominent politician. Recently, she led the charge to overhaul the state's standardized tests. And this year brought difficult battles over funding, as lawmakers sliced \$4 billion from school districts' state funding to close a budget shortfall without raising taxes.

Shapiro said that wasn't a factor in her decision. But conservative activists' push for cuts left Shapiro and others little room to maneuver.

"She's toiled in the vineyards in a thankless job," said former Lt. Gov. Bill Ratliff, who led the Education Committee for four years as a senator. "It's hard to please anybody, particularly in her case, when the Legislature doesn't give you the resources that's needed. I can see why she would be burned out."

Education groups have battled extensively with Republican state leaders over funding and mandates upon school districts in recent years. But they generally credit Shapiro, a former teacher, with preventing deeper cuts or bigger changes sought by House members and others.

Candidates speak up

Shapiro's retirement plans rumbled through the local political establishment and immediately shook loose candidates for her District 8 seat.

Just hours after her announcement, Republican Scott O'Grady, the former Air Force pilot who was shot down in Bosnia, indicated his intentions to mount a campaign, as did Democrat and Plano resident Jack Ternan.

Rep. Ken Paxton, R-McKinney, is also considered a contender for the seat. He congratulated Shapiro on her career and said he would announce his plans soon.

Shapiro said she would not yet endorse a successor.

"I'm going to wait and see how the field unfolds," she said.

Freshman Rep. Van Taylor, R-Plano, praised Shapiro but said he would sit out the race.

"I'm very happy serving the people of Plano in the Texas House right now," he said. "I have no aspirations to higher office at this time."

The district, which will change some as a result of redistricting, is overwhelmingly Republican. The GOP primary in March will almost certainly determine who wins the seat.

Though she's known for education laws, Shapiro said Monday that she considers "Ashley's Laws" against sex offenders to be her greatest legacy. The measures, which enhanced registries of offenders and limited where they could go, were named for 7-year-old Ashley Estell of Plano, who was abducted from a park and murdered in 1993.

"We really put a tremendous focus on sexual predators in the state," she said. "It's satisfying to know we did something to protect our children."

The daughter of immigrants, Shapiro, 63, was a Plano council member, then mayor, before representing a Senate district that stretched from Collin County to Smith County in East Texas. Today, the district is dominated by the bustling suburbs of Collin County.

"I told her that we started [in the Senate] together and we were supposed to finish together," said Sen. Royce West, the Dallas Democrat who has worked with Shapiro on education policy and North Texas priorities. "We haven't always agreed on the method, but we always agreed with what the outcome should be."

Former Rep. Brian McCall, chancellor of Texas State University, worked closely with Shapiro in the Legislature.

"Collin County and Texas benefited greatly from her service," the Plano Republican said. "She's a selfless, giving and talented elected official who always did things for the right reasons."

Plano Mayor Phil Dyer said Shapiro will leave a large footprint both in North Texas and in state education policy.

"She has done an absolutely great job and, day-in, day-out, was a stellar representative," Dyer said of the former Plano mayor. "That's her legacy. She will be sorely missed."

'Disappointed' chief

Plano ISD Superintendent Doug Otto said he was "disappointed" to hear Shapiro planned to retire. "She's been able to get us to the table and involved in discussion for years regarding education," he said.

Otto said her legacy includes "continuous updating of the accountability program and her willingness to go to bat to get more money for schools."

Among the major policies Shapiro helped shape was 2006's massive school finance law. The measure reduced school property taxes and replaced the revenue with higher taxes on businesses and smokers. The aim of the legislation was to reduce the state's reliance on local property taxes to pay for schools — a change that was ordered by the Texas Supreme Court.

Shapiro was also the Senate sponsor of a law that mandated a new student testing program this year, including end-of-course exams in high school that students will have to get a passing average on to receive a diploma.

When the House tried to water down the testing requirements this year, Shapiro blocked the move, insisting that the state not retreat on implementing more rigorous standards in high schools.

She also sponsored a measure this year that will allow school districts to furlough teachers and reduce salaries to deal with massive funding cuts ordered by the Legislature. But she opposed earlier efforts by House leaders to cut education funding by nearly \$10 billion over the next two years — a figure that was reduced to \$4 billion at the insistence of Shapiro and other Senate leaders.

"I worked as hard for the poor districts as the wealthy districts," Shapiro said. "I did it because I believed in the schoolchildren of Texas. Every child in the state of Texas deserves a good education."

Shapiro wouldn't give any details about her new job, but said it would be a continuation of her work to help children get the best education possible.

"It's my passion," she said.

Staff writers Jessica Meyers and Terrence Stutz in Austin contributed to this report.

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AT A GLANCE: SHAPIRO'S LEGISLATIVE LEGACY

School finance: State Sen. Florence Shapiro helped shape the 2006 "tax swap" that reduced local school property taxes.

Testing: She sponsored a law creating end-of-course exams in high school.

Budget cuts: Shapiro helped ward off billions of dollars of cuts that lawmakers wanted this year.

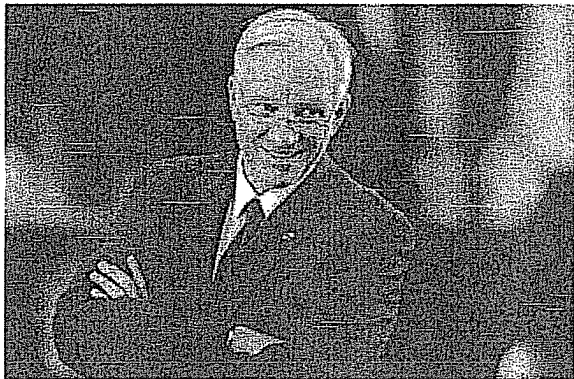
Ashley's Laws: She sponsored restrictions on sex offenders after the gruesome 1993 killing of a child in Plano.

THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

Ogden Won't Seek Another Term

by Ross Ramsey | 14 minutes ago

KEYWORDS: Steve Ogden, Texas Senate, Texas State Senate



[Enlarge](#)

photo by: Bob Daemmrlich

Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Sen. Steve Ogden, R-Bryan, smiles during late afternoon debate on the state budget May 4, 2011

The Texas Senate's chief budget writer — Sen. Steve Ogden, R-Bryan — won't seek reelection, he announced this morning.

The prospect has been in the wind for several weeks. Ogden said during the summer that he wouldn't announce his plans until this month, but has been talking like a guy at the end of his tenure for a while. It took a weird bounce to get Ogden, who chairs the Senate Finance Committee and served as president pro tempore during the legislative session that just ended, back for another session. He announced plans not to seek another term before the 2010 election cycle, then changed his mind when state Rep. Dan Gattis, R-Georgetown, decided not to run in his place.

Ogden got his start in the state House in 1990 and has been in the Senate since 1997. He's the third incumbent to say he won't be back next year. Mike Jackson, R-La Porte, is running for Congress, and Florence Shapiro, R-Plano, said yesterday she won't seek another term.

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Here's his announcement:

After much thought and with great appreciation for the opportunity to have served in the Texas Legislature for the past 20 years, I am not planning to run for re-election as the State Senator from District 5. I feel compelled to announce this so that others may consider running for the office and filing for candidacy. I expect to serve the remainder of my term to January 2013. It has been an honor to serve the people of the 5th District and I am grateful for their confidence and trust. They have enabled me, along with my colleagues in the legislature, to accomplish many things of which we can all be proud.

I am particularly pleased to have co-authored the last four state budgets as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. All were balanced and conservative, attuned to the needs of our state and within its means. Fiscal decisions made by the legislature have contributed to our state's strong economy and excellent financial condition. Texas is a beacon state and its fiscal policies are lighting the way for our nation.

Improving public education has been a major goal of mine since I co-authored House Bill 72 in 1993. Today our schools are better funded, students are better educated, teachers are better paid, and property taxes are significantly lower.

I have also worked to improve the quality and funding of higher education and to help eligible

Texans gain access to the educational opportunities they want and deserve. I expect that Prairie View A&M University's ACCESS program, the state's "Top 10%" scholarship program, and the Armed Services scholarship program will help produce leaders for the rest of the century. I am proud of the dramatic growth of the Texas A&M Health Science Center in Temple, Bryan and Round Rock, and the legislature's insistence on re-building the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston after the devastation of Hurricane Ike. It has been a particular joy to see Blinn College, Sam Houston State University, and Texas A&M University – along with its sister state agencies – flourish over the years of my service.

I'm pleased with the significant enhancements made to our state highway system during my tenure. I am particularly proud of improvements made to State Highway 6 in and around Brazos County and the construction of SH 130 in and around Williamson County. Texas has been nationally recognized for an innovative method of funding of highway safety construction resulting in many saved lives.

Protection of the most vulnerable Texans was one of my major reasons for seeking public office. Texas state government was not "Pro-Life" when I entered the legislature. I worked hard to protect and defend unborn Texans and to provide for foster children, the elderly, and the disabled. Today, children under the guardianship of the state are better cared for and protected. Foster families are better trained and supported. Texans with mental illness or developmental disabilities receive better treatment in more appropriate venues. Our state government is now decisively "Pro-Life" and more people are alive today because of it.

I am proud of our state employees and the support the legislature provided to them through the good times and the tough times. Our salaries are competitive, our retirement system is sound, and our workforce is lean, efficient, well-trained and qualified. The 5th Senatorial District includes a large number of state employees. I always tried to represent them well and champion their interests.

I have many people to thank for sustaining me during my years in public office, especially my wife, Beverly, and our children. I will always be grateful for my colleagues' edification and camaraderie, my staff's dedication and intelligence, and my constituents' support and friendship.

Texas is home. It has been a profound privilege to play a part in her continued growth and overall improvement.

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★ THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

Harris Won't Run Again; Vandergriff's In

by Ross Ramsey | 9/26/2011 | 2 Comments

KEYWORDS: Chris Harris, Rodney Anderson, Texas Senate



[Enlarge](#)

photo by: Bob Daemmrich

State Sen. John Carona, right, and Sen. Chris Harris listen to Sen. Eddie Lucio object to a Texas Windstorm Insurance Association bill passed out of the Senate Business and Commerce Committee on June 22, 2011.

State Sen. Chris Harris, R-Arlington, won't seek another term in the Texas Legislature, he said Monday, and he encouraged Victor Vandergriff — son of the former Arlington mayor, congressman and Tarrant County Judge Tom Vandergriff — to get into the race. Less than two hours later, Vandergriff announced that he intends to run for the seat.

Harris, a veteran lawmaker, has been in office since 1985, when he was elected to the Texas House; he moved up from the House to the Senate in 1991.

Harris is chairman of the Senate's Jurisprudence Committee and has held a number of other leadership positions over his 20 years in the Senate.

He had already drawn opposition from within his party. State Rep. Rodney Anderson, R-Grand Prairie,

announced his intention to run as what he called a more conservative alternative to Harris.

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Harris is the fourth Republican senator to drop out of next year's elections. Mike Jackson of La Porte is running for Congress, and Florence Shapiro of Plano and Steve Ogden of Bryan said last week they won't run again.

Here is Harris' announcement:

Chairman Chris Harris announces he will not seek re-election to the Texas Senate

Harris says he intends to spend more time practicing law and supporting the community; encourages Victor Vandergriff to seek Senate District 9 seat.

ARLINGTON, Tex. - Chairman Chris Harris, the longest serving Republican in the Texas Senate, announces today he will not seek re-election in 2012 and will return full time to his law practice and serving his community locally.

"I want to express my deepest gratitude to the people of North Texas and to my family for allowing me to serve," says Senator Harris. "It has been the greatest honor of my life that my friends and neighbors have asked me to represent them alongside so many amazing men and women for almost three decades."

Harris began his public service in the Texas House of Representatives in 1985 where he immediately distinguished himself as a budget hawk and advocate for children and families. After his election to the Texas Senate in 1991, Harris became that body's authority on matters of civil and criminal jurisprudence, specifically in the area of family law.

"Since my time serving with him in the Texas House of Representatives and as Lieutenant Governor and Governor, I have not seen a stronger advocate for his constituents than Chris Harris," recalls Texas Governor Rick Perry.

Harris has consistently kept a watchful eye on education and the state budget, paying particular attention to identifying more resources for local school districts and the University of Texas at Arlington, Tarrant County's only public 4-year university.

"UTA would not be the quality academic institution it is today if not for the relentless efforts of Senator Harris," says UTA president James Spaniolo.

"I began this job 26 years ago with a goal of making Texas a better place," says Harris. "I am proud of the results we have achieved working together, but there is more to be done. Senate District 9 needs strong leadership and I am encouraging Victor Vandergriff to step in and take over where I will leave off in the next legislative session."

Senator Harris will serve out the remainder of his term ending January 2013. After retirement Harris plans to return full-time to his law practice working on behalf of the community and public entities, and enjoying more time with his wife Tammy, his children and particularly his grandchildren.

Harris' Law partner and Mansfield mayor David Cook reminds everyone, "I have watched Senator Harris fight for the citizens of DFW for years, both as a lawyer in the courthouse and as a legislator in the statehouse. That warrior will keep fighting for what is right for the people of this region and this state."

And here is Vandergriff's statement, which followed a short while later:

"My family and I join with folks across the Metroplex in thanking Senator Chris Harris for his decades of public service.

Our area faces many challenges in our near-term future. Like so many of our citizens and small business owners, I believe that we can create the most opportunities for growth and prosperity by promoting conservative principles in our state government. Whether it is keeping taxes low, preventing an overly burdensome regulatory environment, or eliminating wasteful spending, our state government has an important role to play in furthering job and economic growth for Texas families.

That is why it is my intention to offer myself as a candidate for the Republican nomination of the 9th Senatorial District. Over the next couple of weeks, I will be talking, and praying, with my family, friends, and leaders from around our area in order to help me make a final decision. I expect to make a formal announcement about my plans on Tuesday, October 11th."

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Chris Harris won't seek re-election to Texas Senate

Posted Monday, Sep. 26, 2011

BY AMAN BATHEJA

abatheja@star-telegram.com

State Sen. Chris Harris announced Monday that he will not run for re-election and immediately endorsed Victor Vandergriff, son of the late Tarrant County Judge Tom Vandergriff, as his replacement.

Harris first joined the Senate in 1991 and is its longest-serving Republican. He previously served six years in the Texas House.

"It has been the greatest honor of my life that my friends and neighbors have asked me to represent them alongside so many amazing men and women for almost three decades," Harris said.

Harris, R-Arlington, is chairman of the Criminal Jurisprudence Committee and vice chairman of the Business and Commerce Committee. His current term ends January 2013.

"Since my time serving with him in the Texas House of Representatives and as Lieutenant Governor and Governor, I have not seen a stronger advocate for his constituents than Chris Harris," Gov. Rick Perry said Monday in a statement.

Harris said he wants Vandergriff to continue his work representing Senate District 9. Vandergriff is chairman of the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles. Last week, he stepped down as chairman of the North Texas Tollway Authority.

"Senate District 9 needs strong leadership, and I am encouraging Victor Vandergriff to step in and take over where I will leave off in the next legislative session," Harris said.

While Vandergriff said he is grateful for Harris' support and said he is still discussing a possible run with family, friends and community leaders, he also issued a statement through a spokesman saying that "it is my intention to offer myself as a candidate for the Republican nomination for the 9th Senatorial District" with the expectation of making a formal announcement by Oct. 11.

"I'm strongly considering it. It's a job that I would love to do, but clearly it's not something I was planning on doing," Vandergriff said.

Last month, state Rep. Rodney Anderson, R-Grand Prairie, announced that he plans to challenge Harris in next year's primary.

At the time, Harris said he planned to run for another term.

Senate District 9 was significantly redrawn during this year's legislative redistricting. The district now covers only a sliver of Tarrant County in parts of Arlington and Grand Prairie. In the new plan, the district takes in much more of Tarrant, including Arlington, Colleyville, Euless, Bedford and Southlake.

Meanwhile, the Denton County portion of the district was cut out. The map is the subject of several federal lawsuits. Harris' announcement adds to the unusually high amount of turnover coming to the 31-member Senate next year.

Sens. Florence Shapiro of Plano, Steve Ogden of Bryan and Mike Jackson of La Porte, all Republicans, have also announced that they don't plan to run for re-election.